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Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

7941st meeting
Tuesday, 16 May 2017, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Rosselli	(Uruguay)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	China	Mr. Shen Bo
	Egypt	Mr. Kandeel
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Italy	Mr. Cardi
	Japan	Mr. Kawamura
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Zagaynov
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	Ukraine	Mr. Fesko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Tachco

Agenda

Security Council mission

Briefing by Security Council mission to Colombia (3 to 5 May 2017)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Security Council mission

Briefing by Security Council mission to Colombia (3 to 5 May 2017)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Colombia to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear briefings by the two co-leads of the Security Council mission to Colombia, which took place from 3 to 5 May, namely, the United Kingdom and Uruguay.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of Uruguay.

The Security Council mission to Colombia, which Uruguay had the honour of co-leading with the United Kingdom, took place from 3 to 5 May. The purpose of the visit was to express the support of the Council for the implementation of the Final Peace Agreement, as referred to in the terms of reference of the Security Council mission, as well as to hear from all stakeholder: the Government, the people of Colombia, the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejército Popular (FARC-EP), the United Nations Mission in Colombia and the country team, and to ascertain the progress made in and the difficulties of the process.

The visit took place over two days. I shall report on the activities conducted on 4 May before handing over to my colleague, Ambassador Matthew Rycroft, who will describe the activities of the second day.

On 4 May, we held institutional meetings in the city of Bogotá. Those took place in three key instances. The first was a meeting of the Council members with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Colombia and Head of the United Nations Mission in Colombia, Mr. Jean Arnault, who stressed the timeliness of the visit, given that the parties were working to complete the process of laying down of arms within the 180-day term set out in the agreement. Other aspects of the process and the Council's potential contributions to it were also discussed there.

Council members also met with the Resident Coordinator and all the bodies, funds and programmes of the United Nations country team. During the visit, we were able to appreciate the excellent work of Special Representative Jean Arnault and the United Nations Mission in Colombia, and we thank them for all of the support that they provided to the Security Council mission.

Also of great importance were the meetings with Government authorities.

The President of the Republic, Juan Manuel Santos, received us as members of the Security Council and then held an extended meeting with the highest authorities, including, besides the President himself, the Vice-President, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the High Commissioner for Peace and several other senior officials of the Government of Colombia.

In addition to thanking us for the visit, the President also expressed gratitude for the support that the Council is extending to the peace process in Colombia. We also heard from the Congressional Peace Commission, which brings together the entire Colombian political spectrum. Its representatives stressed the importance of safeguarding the achievements made as part of the peace process.

Another key moment was an exchange with the National Commission for Follow-up, Impulse and Verification of the Implementation of Peace Agreement, in which Mr. Sergio Jaramillo Caro, High Commissioner for Peace, and Mr. Iván Márquez, Commander of the FARC-EP, also participated. At that meeting, Mr. Jaramillo referred to the progress on the issues that are being worked on as peace is implemented, such as, inter alia, the gender perspective, indigenous peoples and comprehensive economic recovery strategies. The FARC-EP referred to the importance of reconciliation, to the system of truth, justice, reparations, non-repetition, and guarantees, especially in the areas of security and legal and political matters.

We also held a meeting with members of civil society. Several organizations expressed their concern about insecurity and killings in local communities. The Council also heard the same concern from the Government and the FARC. We share that concern and call for institutional protection measures to be

implemented to respond to the threat of armed groups. Women's organizations pointed out the disproportionate harm suffered by women in conflict and post-conflict environments. We acknowledged the fundamental importance of the gender perspective in peace processes. Members of civil society suggested the establishment of a successor United Nations mission that should be deployed throughout the territory of Colombia. During the visit, we witnessed the commitment of the parties, the goodwill and the hope that Colombians have for the results of this peace process.

As a general assessment of those meetings, I would like to highlight the commitment of all participants in the peace process to continuing their best efforts to move the process forward, with the awareness of the difficulties that were raised and knowing that further difficulties will arise in future, as is normal for such processes. Several of these difficulties derive from the difficult conditions in relation to building the federal zones, which are in very rural and distant areas, where highways and all the other infrastructure that is needed for their installation still need to be built. Another factor that has had a negative impact is the climate, with heavy rains making tasks extremely difficult. Another difficulty relates the pace of the adoption of legal and administrative measures for the purpose of reintegrating former combatants in civilian life. In all cases, these points were brought up not as complaints but to indicate the difficulties for which efforts must be made if they are to be resolved.

I now give the floor to my colleague Ambassador Matthew Rycroft.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): I thank the President for organizing, presiding over and co-leading our highly successful visit to Colombia 10 days ago. It was a great privilege to co-lead it with you, Sir. I also want to thank all of the Permanent Representatives around the table for taking part and for participating so energetically. I think we all got a lot from the visit.

As the President said, my job is to brief the Security Council on the second day of the visit, when the Council travelled to the Vista Hermosa, municipality in the Meta department in the south. It was approximately one hour by airplane, plus an hour by helicopter, south of Bogotá. We visited the La Reforma local transitional zone, where the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) are laying down their arms. We were accompanied by Jean Arnault, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, by senior Government officials, including the Colombian Foreign Minister and the Colombian Permanent Representative, and by the High Commissioner for Peace, plus members of the FARC-EP secretariat, including Iván Márquez and Pastor Alape.

There were three key elements to the day. First of all, when we arrived, we received a fascinating briefing from leaders of the Tripartite Monitoring and Verification Mechanism. They gave us a tour of their site, which gave us an insight into the challenging terrain that they have to operate in but also the unique character of the Mechanism and the remarkable joint working between the United Nations, the Colombian Government and the FARC members of that Mechanism.

Then we went on to a town hall-style meeting at a community centre with members of the local community and the Governor of the Meta department. The rain by then was beating down on the corrugated iron roof of the hall, and we were absolutely crammed in shoulder to shoulder. There were many community leaders, women, children, teachers and others present, who gave us fascinating insights into what peace means for that community.

Thirdly, and in a way even more remarkably, we had an opportunity to meet members of the FARC-EP at one of the newly built reception centres, just outside their camp area, along with the Special Representative, the Foreign Minister, the Permanent Representative and the High Commissioner for Peace. It was a fascinating site to see, at very short notice, all of these families coming to us, carrying their chairs with us to this new place to sit down together and really overcome the conflict, which, until recently, had driven the country apart for 52 years.

I mentioned before the challenging weather conditions. Our bus did get stuck completely in the mud on our way back to our helicopter, but we managed to navigate that challenge successfully. I think we all left confident that the parties — between them — can navigate all challenges that the peace process is speeding up.

I wantto leave the Council with the three main conclusions that I think we came away. First of all, it is remarkable how much has already happened since the Peace Agreement was signed. Yes, we heard a lot about the challenges. We heard about the difficulties and the obstacles, but, actually, when we consider how much

has been done, it is very impressive, particularly given the challenging terrain and so on.

Almost 7,000 members of the FARC-EP have arrived smoothly in the transition zones, and they have begun their process of laying down of arms. That Tripartite Monitoring and Verification Mechanism, led by the United Nations, is working well. Twenty per cent of those observers are women. And the local community spoke powerfully about the positive results that they hoped to see as a result of the peace process. It was fascinating to hear FARC members pay tribute to the leadership of the military and the police of Colombia. That is the first point: how far the parties and the people of Colombia have come.

Secondly, I think we heard vividly about the impact of the conflict on the communities most affected by it, particularly away from the big cities, and the challenges ahead. We heard about killings of community leaders, as illegal armed groups moved into new areas. We heard about the importance of sustained implementation of all parts of the Agreement, not just the bit about the laying down of arms, and that is going to be crucial, particularly for those communities most affected by the conflict.

Thirdly, I think that we were all impressed by the commitment of both parties to stay the course, to see this through, to make sure that every single part of the Agreement is implemented, with continued support from the international community. I think we heard that both on the first day and on the second day, out in the field. As I said, yes, they are real challenges ahead, but I think that having that united view that peace is now irreversible was a strong message for us all to take home.

In conclusion, I think it is worth noting again in this Chamber the strength and the unity of the Security Council support for Colombia, for the people of Colombia, for the Government of Colombia and for the FARC as they continue to implement this crucial Peace Agreement. The issue, I think, is still a ray of sunlight on our agenda, and I hope that we all feel privileged to be able to lend our support to the implementation of the Peace Agreement. As we said in our presidential statement (S/PRST/2017/6) upon our return, we all remain fully committed to the peace process and are determined to play a constructive and active role in the months ahead.

Finally, I would like to thank the United Nations Mission for supporting the visit and for its tireless work in challenging conditions, as well as the Secretariat for all of its efforts during their visit. I also thank Ambassador Mejía Vélez for everything that she and her colleagues and the Government of Colombia have done.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now give the floor to members of the Security Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I will be brief. I want to thank you, Mr. President, and the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom for their briefings on the Security Council visit to Colombia. We also welcome the Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations, Ambassador María Emma Mejía Vélez.

The Security Council's visit to Colombia is historic for the Council. We meet in the Council almost daily to meet the fundamental responsibility entrusted to us by the States Members of the United Nations — the maintenance of international peace and security. On some occasions, that sacred duty leads us down difficult paths, but on others like this one it unites us in a fraternal bond.

Today, Colombia symbolizes the importance of the Council for the world by maintaining unity while respecting the sovereign decisions of States and firmly supporting the peacebuilding process. The frank dialogue with President Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, his Ministers and Government representatives at all levels allowed us to fully understand both the great achievements that have been made in the process as the challenges to the implementation of the Final Peace Agreement.

You, Mr. President, have identified many such challenges, and we agreement with your assessment. Some of those challenges include meteorological conditions, the remoteness of certain locations and the building of sites for depositing weapons. Additionally, listening to the leaders and members of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejército Popular (FARC-EP) has allowed us to understand their concerns and fears for the future, as well as their decision to abandon armed resistance, lay down their weapons and take up their struggle in the political arena instead. Throughout, the Government and the FARC-EP have put their doubts behind them, and the commitment, determination and courage of both sides

is evident. We note with great satisfaction the amicable interactions and environment between the parties.

I recall that during our meeting with members of Congress, we all pointed out the importance of political leadership during peace processes. I must commend both the political leadership of President Santos Calderón and the leadership and political resolve of the FARC-EP to embark upon this difficult path. During the same meeting, one of the congresswomen noted that there is a third party to the peace process — the victims, the third vertex of the virtuous triangle. The forgiveness of victims that have opted for the peace process, despite its difficulties, is fundamental. That virtuous triangle is the secret to the success of Colombia's peace process.

The Final Peace Agreement is a comprehensive and complex agreement that establishes a framework of responsibilities and measures to ensure effective reintegration and reconciliation. It also creates opportunities for resolving the structural issues that led to the armed conflict, such as integrated rural reform. One of the most concerning consequences, as was mentioned, is the assassination of community leaders. We applaud the decision of President Santos Calderón of creating a commission to ensure the safety of the population, but also of presiding over it himself and personally overseeing its success.

Finally, I want to emphasize the support of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States for the peace process and to highlight the efforts of the United Nations team led by Mr. Jean Arnault. I also want to pay a special tribute to Colombia's Minister for Foreign Affairs, María Ángela Holguín Cuéllar, and to Colombia's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Ambassador Mejía Vélez, two women who have worked diligently to guide this difficult process.

We congratulate you, Mr. President, on the manner in which you have led the Council on this mission. I think I speak for everyone in saying that we stand behind all that you have said. You have admirably discharged the lofty duties of President of the Security Council, and I would like to very sincerely thank you. I also wish to thank the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom for having co-led the process. His support has been invaluable to the success of our mission. We know that the road ahead is difficult, but the Council is firmly committed to supporting Colombia, upon their request.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Colombia.

Ms. Mejía Vélez (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the President, the United Kingdom Ambassador, who co-led the mission, and all the members of the Security Council. On behalf of my Government and on my own behalf, I thank the Council for having gone to my country to see first hand what is taking place, to be informed by the "prime movers of Colombia" — to quote Ambassador Rosselli — by the State, by civil society, by ex-combatants, who, as we build peace through the implementation of the Agreement, need to be increasingly united. That was also the perceived goal of the visit and of the Council's message to Colombia — one of unity and of seizing the enormous opportunity of having reached a negotiated rather than elusive peace.

The Council vote of confidence in the peace process will bear fruit despite the specific difficulties that have been voiced in the Chamber. We are at a crucial stage in the peacebuilding process, one in which the support of the Security Council and the Secretary-General have been unwavering and, in which my Government has asked that the process be verified and monitored through this tripartite mechanism. We are faced with the formidable challenge of maintaining the methodology of work on three fronts, which must now transition to a new process aimed at ensuring the economic, social and political reintegration of ex-combatants.

I think that this stage of the implementation of the political mission of the tripartite monitoring and verification mechanism to ensure the ceasefire and disarmament timetable has been critical. I will employ the metaphor used by Ambassador Rycroft, that the peace process is not longer the bus stuck in the mud but rather a venture with tangible results. Considering that the past eight months have resulted in no conflict-related deaths, no wounded, no attacks on national structures and no abductions, 2,670 lives have been saved by the Peace Agreement — as President Santos Calderón pointed out. Meanwhile, we continue the process of providing reparations to the victims, which has been a core issue since the beginning of the negotiations, as well as land restitution. The degree to which the victims feel compensated and taken into account will determine how successfully the deep wounds left by the protracted Colombian conflict will heal.

The Council's visit to Vista Hermosa showed them the progress in the laying down of arms, the ceasefire and the monitoring of such activities. There will, undoubtedly, be setbacks but we are confident that the

process will proceed according to the agreed timetable, despite the enormous challenges it entails.

I want to share with the Council another major piece of news that we heard about yesterday: that another area in the Andes, in the department of Antioquia, El Orejón, which over past decades experienced what may be one of the worst wars ever and was infamous for being the most heavily mined Colombian municipality, was visited yesterday by the Foreign Minister and representatives of the international community, who certified it as being free of landmines, free of illegal crops and free of clashes involving the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejército del Pueblo.

This model, in which agencies of the Colombian Government, coordinated in the framework of the border plan of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Colombia, complemented by 17 social and infrastructure projects, made it possible to deliver results to a community that include what we hope will be Day D+181, namely, the first 100 days post-conflict and of the laying down of arms; to continue the task of rebuilding the first 50 municipalities with respect to their social fabric, through reconciliation and the strengthening of the security mechanisms that, as the Council has noted, are of concern to many people; and to bring to all Colombians — why not? — that rural prosperity that has eluded them until now.

Finally, the goals and challenges involved are many. We acknowledge the Council's concern over the murders of certain social leaders and human rights defenders, as reported in recent months. All of the relevant bodies of the Colombian Government are working to investigate, capture and bring those responsible to justice. The authorities have noted that although some cases involve killings associated with the defence of human rights, the Government is aware of the damaging presence of other factors outside the law. They are advancing negotiations in the area of public security, an area that we also have to address.

Lastly, as Ambassador Sacha would say, the Council's support is extraordinary. Truly, on behalf of all Colombians, I want to say that it was extremely moving to see its commitment, dedication and determination to ensure that this exercise was a positive one. I should like also to thank the Secretariat for all its work, and we hope that this positive news will continue at this second stage we as Colombians are beginning, with the support of the Council.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): There are no further speakers inscribed on my list.

The meeting rose at 3.35 p.m.